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Letter dated 22 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the Dubai Declaration on Integrated Water Resource Management in Arid Regions adopted by the Dubai International Conference on Integrated Management of Water Resources in the Third Millennium, held from 2 to 6 February 2002 under the patronage of His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Minister of Defence of the United Arab Emirates and sponsor of the Zayed International Prize for the Environment.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 98.

(*Signed*) Abdulaziz Bin Nasser **Al-Shamsi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 22 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic and English]

Dubai Declaration on Integrated Water Resource Management in Arid Regions

Dubai, 5 February 2002

The participants of the Dubai International Conference on Integrated Management of Water Resources in the Third Millennium, comprising Ministers and senior government officials, representatives of United Nations organizations, the scientific community, the private sector, NGOs and the media, meeting in Dubai on 2-6 February 2002 under the patronage of His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Minister of Defense, UAE, Patron of the Zayed Prize for the Environment:

Emphasizing that water is life; a key element of sustainable development; essential to the maintenance of the hydrological, biological and chemical functions of ecosystems; a social and economic good vital for food security, poverty alleviation and income generation. Conflicts over water are a major threat to peace and stability, especially in arid regions of the world;

Affirming that all human societies depend on ecosystems, which are of vital importance to the poorest communities in providing valuable goods and services;

Stressing that adequate water flows are necessary for environmental services to maintain ecosystem functions, through conserving river stretches, wetlands, floodplains, estuaries and watersheds;

Recognizing that the recommendations of Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 adopted at the Rio Summit in 1992 (UNCED) for a sustainable water future have not yet been achieved;

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration in which governments committed themselves to double the number of people with access to safe drinking water and to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources through the development of water management strategies;

Recognizing that the Ministerial Declaration of the Second World Water Forum and the World Commission on Dams have demonstrated that people and governments of different and sometimes opposing views can converge on constructive alternatives and form new partnerships on water resources management that go beyond sectoral approaches;

Reaffirming the recommendations of the Bonn International Conference on Freshwater on priority actions in the areas of governance, mobilizing financial resources and capacity-building and sharing knowledge;

Recalling that the joint African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment

(CAMRE) Declaration on Sustainable Development identified sound management of water resources as essential for humankind, ecosystem health and food security;

Propose that the following principles and considerations should be incorporated into the deliberations and resolutions of the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002;

Water resources development should be based on optimal solutions for all users within catchment basins, including protecting water rights, providing sufficient amounts of clean water for domestic and other uses; recognizing the needs and the special circumstances of the indigenous peoples and the poor;

National Water Resource Policies require integrated strategies and plans for the conservation, risk assessment, and management of all sector allocations, especially for irrigation, taking into consideration the socio-economic cost of producing and delivering water based on "renewability" and sustainable use;

Further research and development is needed on non-conventional sources of water, such as treated wastewater, brackish and saline water, including cost-effective desalination and water harvesting; and on models to address the hydrologic and economic ramifications of changing water use;

Better understanding is needed of the hydrological cycle in arid regions, and of the critical relationships between water resources management, climate change, desertification and the conservation of biodiversity;

Comprehensive monitoring programmes and databases, linked to existing global observation and assessment initiatives, should be developed on transfers of water and dissolved solids within the hydrological cycle; hydrologic and chemical stresses; and the various uses of water in major catchment basins, in order to achieve demand-based, multi-stakeholder water management strategies;

Developed countries have a responsibility to meet their commitments to provide financial support to developing countries, which should include the transfer of water resource development technologies, as well as research into developing more drought and salt resistant plants. Developing countries in arid regions have a responsibility to maintain and further develop their traditional water management practices and institutions, incorporating sustainable new approaches and technologies;

Public awareness, education and capacity-building in the areas of monitoring, assessment and management of water resources should be strengthened, giving special attention and support to the needs of developing countries;

Participatory approaches to water resource management should be promoted, emphasizing the important roles of all stakeholders, especially women;

Declare also that the United Nations is the appropriate forum for the resolution of water related conflicts as well as for the elaboration of policies, guidelines and programmes for water management at global, regional and national levels;

Call on governments, within this framework, to work with each other and with all stakeholders to act as a matter of urgency, to develop and implement integrated water management strategies.